



Lesotho

The small landlocked country of Lesotho sits atop of the Maluti mountain range and is completely surrounded by South Africa. Commonly referred to as the “kingdom in the sky,” the country’s lowlands sit at over 1,400 meters above sea level with parts of the highlands reaching well above 3,000 meters.

Naturally isolated because of its elevation, many rural villages in the highlands are only accessible on foot or pony and have changed little over the years. Villages are still ruled by a village chief and extended family structures remain the base of village communities. Subsistence farming, raising of livestock, and preparing meals over an open fire are the dominant daily activities.

Lesotho is far less developed and gets far fewer visitors than many nearby countries, two great reasons to head into the mountains and experience the welcoming hospitality of the Basotho people.



CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

Lesotho

- ❶ **Malealea** – Visit a century-old trading post, then take a pony trek to a home stay in a mountain village (p600)
- ❷ **Semonkong** – Ascend into the mountains to Semonkong and can enjoy the slow pace of life surrounded by some of the country's best waterfalls (p597)
- ❸ **Morija** – Wander through this pleasant and tranquil town just 45 minutes from Maseru, home to the country's oldest building and only museum (p598)
- ❹ **Sani Pass** – Enjoy a frosty beer at the “highest pub in Africa” after navigating gravel switchbacks to top of the highest mountain pass in the country (p615)
- ❺ **Sehlabathebe National Park** - Hike into this pristine Drakensberg mountain park from within Lesotho or across the border from KwaZulu-Natal to explore its wildlife, lush valleys and waterfalls (p605)



HISTORY

The nomadic San hunter-gatherers who left iconic drawings on cave walls scattered throughout the Maluti Mountains were the first people to enjoy Lesotho's breathtaking terrain. By 1000 A.D. a branch of Sotho-Tswana speaking migrants descended from central Africa and settled in the region. These settlers later became known as the Southern Sotho or Basotho. Their original settlements stretched from the southern Lesotho lowlands to the flatlands of the Highveld, now the northern Free State. The Basotho lived in small disparate chiefdoms as farmers, herdsman and skilled craftsmen and engaged in trade with their neighbors. There was ample space for all and they lived in relative peace.

Violence disrupted their lives when the reverberations of warfare between rising Nguni kingdoms in the east crept over the mountains and spread into the Highveld in the early 1800s. In what later became known as the *lifaqane* or *difaqane* ("the scattering" in Sesotho), far-reaching factions of Zulu warriors and defecting Nguni tribes, such as the Ndebele under King Mzilikazi, wreaked havoc among the Sotho peoples. Chiefdoms in the wide-open plains of the Free State were easy targets for attacks. Those who were not killed fled to the mountains for refuge.

During this turbulent period the Great Moshoeshoe, chief of the Mokoteli clan, rose to power. Moshoeshoe had successfully fended off attacks from his stronghold in the slopes of the Butha-Buthe Mountain. But after a devastating assault by the Batlokoa clan, Moshoeshoe decided to move his followers to the famous impenetrable mountain plateau of Thaba-Bosiu, meaning "mountain at night", in 1824. With only a few scalable routes up to the plateau summit, it was virtually impossible for invaders to take. Clans of refugees flocked to Moshoeshoe's mountain stronghold, seeking sanctuary and protection. Moshoeshoe offered them land in exchange for their loyalty and from the heights of Thaba-Bosiu the Basotho nation was born.

Moshoeshoe built his Sotho kingdom using dual tactics of military might and diplomacy. He became famous for defeating belligerent rivals and then sending gifts of diplomacy as a consolation for their loss. When Moshoeshoe heard of the strategic benefits missionaries had afforded other chiefdoms, he invited members of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society to settle

in his kingdom. The presence of missionaries not only provided a level of security against attacks, but they also proved to be valuable political and economic allies. The missionaries learned the Sesotho language, served as translators, advised Moshoeshoe on foreign relations with the white man and facilitated the importation of firearms and horses from the Cape Colony to help protect their beloved Basotho. With their help, Moshoeshoe built one of the best-armed mounted armies in southern Africa. While Moshoeshoe himself never converted to Christianity, he appreciated aspects of their ministry and the educational advantage they offered his people.

Boer frontiersman began to settle in the region in the 1830s. Initially Moshoeshoe loaned them land, but soon they claimed the territory as their own and began chipping away at Moshoeshoe's kingdom. They occupied the fertile valley of the Caledon River, or Mohokare River, by force and drove satellite Sotho chiefdoms further into the mountains. In 1843 the British tried to regulate conflicting land claims between the Boers and the Sotho with an ill-fated treaty that signed over tracts of land to the British. Rather than diffusing tensions the treaty fueled the fire. In 1852 British forces under Sir George Cathcart invaded the region hoping to enforce their new boundaries. But the Sotho forces crushed the invaders in an embarrassing blow to the British. Moshoeshoe's diplomatic outreach in the face of British defeat garnered great respect with Sir Cathcart. Within two years the Sotho regained their supremacy in the region and the British effectively withdrew.

With the British gone the Boers declared their independent republic of the Orange Free State and again turned their sights on the Sotho Kingdom. The First Basotho-Boer War in 1858 had the Boers retreating in defeat, but not before they destroyed key missionary posts and schools. Two more Basotho-Boer Wars were fought within the course of a decade. In 1865 the slopes of Thaba-Bosiu again frustrated early Boer attacks, but later losses forced Moshoeshoe's hand into signing away portions of his territory. Desperate to save the remnants of his kingdom from complete annihilation, Moshoeshoe appealed to the British Crown for protection. In 1868 Basutoland, as it was then called, was declared a British Protectorate. The British signed a peace treaty with the Boers and almost all of the country's flat, arable land was ceded to the Orange Free State.

In 1870 Moshoeshoe the Great died. He had built one of southern Africa's strongest kingdoms, defended it from complete destruction by white invaders, and saw it grow exponentially, only to then have half of it signed away in a treaty between colonial powers. His son Letsie succeeded him as Paramount Chief. One year later the British Crown handed Basutoland over to the Cape Colony for direct colonial administration.

Unrest grew in the new colony as the Cape tried to undermine the authority of traditional chiefs. When Cape officials tried to reserve part of Basutoland for white settlement and demanded that the Basotho disarm, the chiefs led their subjects in full revolt. In the Gun War of 1880, the Basotho waged guerilla warfare against Cape Colony regiments from their mountain hideouts. In the end the Cape Colony efforts to forcibly disarm the Basotho failed. The British intervened and the Crown reclaimed direct colonial administration over Basutoland in 1884.

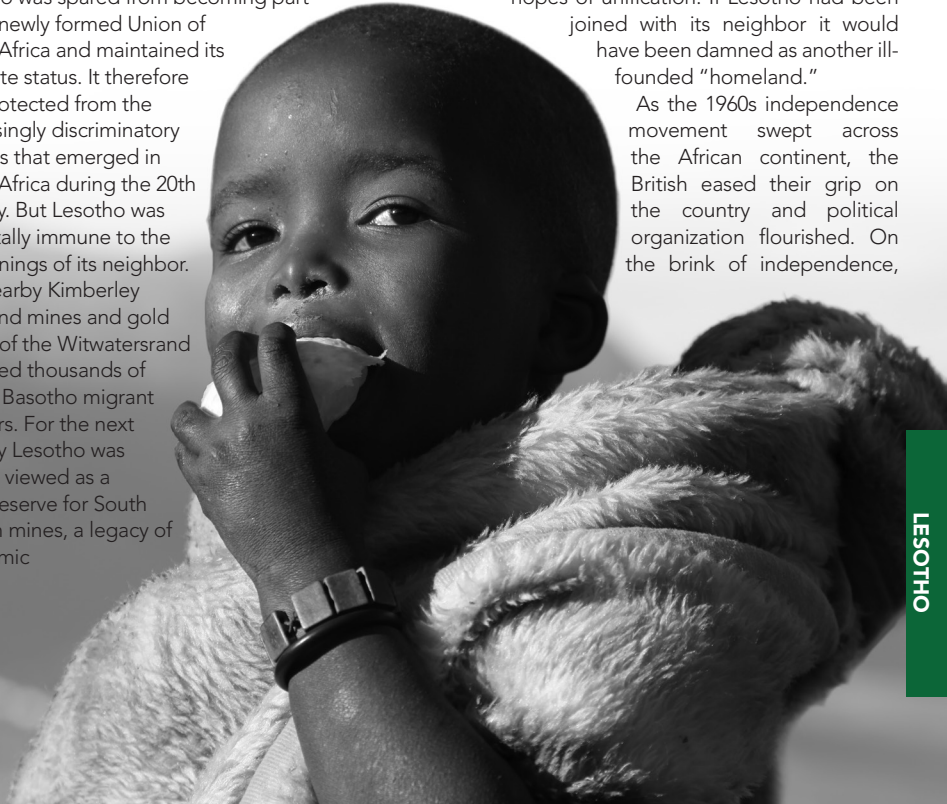
Lesotho remained a British Crown colony between 1884 and independence in 1966. In 1910 Lesotho was spared from becoming part of the newly formed Union of South Africa and maintained its separate status. It therefore was protected from the increasingly discriminatory policies that emerged in South Africa during the 20th century. But Lesotho was not totally immune to the happenings of its neighbor. The nearby Kimberley diamond mines and gold mines of the Witwatersrand attracted thousands of young Basotho migrant laborers. For the next century Lesotho was largely viewed as a labor reserve for South African mines, a legacy of economic

dependence that would later have severe repercussions.

Although a British colony, chiefs continued to be the authority in much of Lesotho daily life. Largely educated by missionaries, chiefs such as Paramount Chief Letsie II formed alliances with other politically driven members of the African elite class and in 1912 helped found the South African Native National Congress, later the African National Congress (ANC), to demand racial equality. Letsie II's reign was short-lived, however, and he died without an heir. His brother, Griffith Leretholi, was appointed to succeed him. Griffith's reign was marred by his efforts to further extend monarchy power and force the country to convert to Roman Catholicism. Tensions between commoners and chiefs heightened, as did conflicts between the established Paris Evangelical Missionary Society and Roman Catholic missionaries, who battled for the hearts and souls of the Basotho people.

The British had long dreamt that one day Lesotho would somehow be incorporated into South Africa. However the rise of the apartheid state crushed all hopes of unification. If Lesotho had been joined with its neighbor it would have been damned as another ill-founded "homeland."

As the 1960s independence movement swept across the African continent, the British eased their grip on the country and political organization flourished. On the brink of independence,



three major parties emerged. The Basotho Congress Party (BCP) led by Pan Africanist Ntsu Mokhehle, hoped to unite the divided country through a platform of African socialism. More conservative BCP factions later broke to form the Basutoland National Party (BNP) led by Chief Leabua Jonathan, who allied with the Catholic Church in his bid for national rule. High-level chiefs formed the royalist Marema-Tlou Party (MTP) hoping to maintain the status quo of chief authority post-independence.

The conservative Catholic BNP narrowly won the 1965 elections and Chief Leabua Jonathan led the country to independence as a constitutional monarchy on October 4, 1966. King Moshoeshoe II remained the ceremonial head of state but political power was vested in Prime Minister Jonathan and the parliament. But when the BNP was set to lose the first post-independence elections in 1970, Jonathan nullified the elections, suspended the constitution and declared a State of Emergency. Political parties were banned and King Moshoeshoe II was exiled. The country fell victim to a one-party government and Jonathan ruled by decree for the next 16 years. Though unpopular with his own people, Jonathan was an outspoken critic of apartheid South Africa, which garnered favor with the international community. Jonathan also offered refuge to ANC exiles who used the landlocked country as a strategic internal base. South Africa in turn responded by blockading Lesotho's borders and covertly backed a military coup d'état to overthrow Jonathan.

After the 1986 military coup, King Moshoeshoe II returned from exile. However tensions within the military regime between royalists who advocated for monarchy rule and those who favored democratic reforms again forced the king into exile. In 1990 the foreign-educated Letsie III assumed the throne. In 1993 the country again held democratic elections and the BCP, led by Ntsu Mokhehle, was victorious. But the BCP's rule was blemished by a legacy of political and military instability. Under pressure, King Letsie III dismissed the new government and tried to install his own administration, which soon crumbled. The elected BCP leaders were reinstated. Letsie III was shamed and abdicated in favor of his father who again returned from exile. Unfortunately, a year later Moshoeshoe II died in a car accident in the mountains and Letsie III retook the throne.

Turmoil engulfed the country throughout the 1990s. As apartheid was dismantled, the new democratic South Africa reformed the mining industry to favor South African laborers. Lesotho's economy had long been heavily dependent on remittances from Basotho migrant laborers, over 90,000 of which now found themselves unemployed. Poverty and redundancy fueled growing unrest, which exacerbated political infighting in the government. Prime Minister Mokhehle defected from the ruling BCP and formed a new Lesotho Congress for Democracy

The Basics

CAPITAL - Maseru

POPULATION - 2.1 million

LANGUAGE - Sesotho, English, Zulu, Xhosa

TIME ZONE - GMT +2

BORDERS - South Africa

VISA - Most western foreign nationals do not need to arrange for visas prior to travel. Entrance permits are valid for 14-28 days and are available upon arrival for no charge.

MONEY - \$1 USD = M7.4, £1 GBP = M11.1, €1 EUR = M10, ¥1 JPY = M0.08, R1 ZAR = M1

The Lesotho Maloti (M) is pegged to the South African Rand. Most people will accept rand bills, but some may not accept rand coins. Expect to get change back in Maloti. Try not to have any Maloti upon leaving the country, as it can be very difficult to change it into other currencies outside of Lesotho. First National Bank, Nedbank, and Standard Bank Lesotho are normally open from 8:30am-3:30pm Mon-Fri and 8:30am-11am Sat.

TIPPING - 10 percent in restaurants. Tipping tour guides is common. Tipping taxis not necessary, but appreciated.

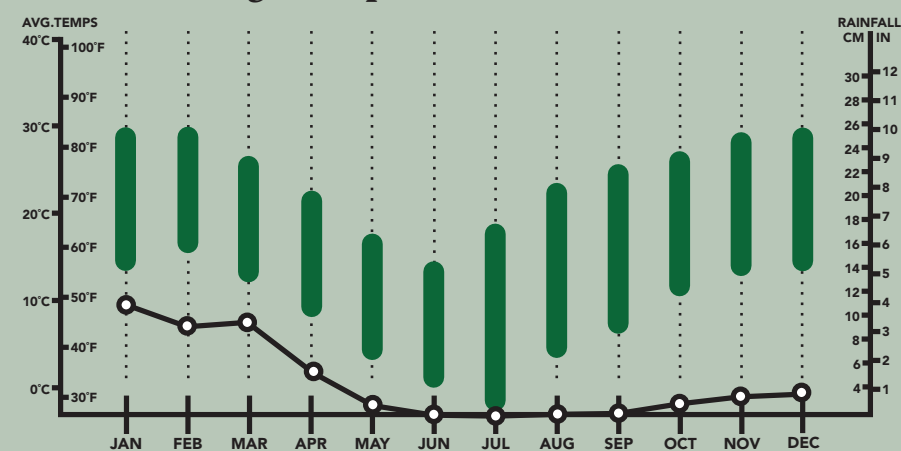
PHONE - Country code + 266. Note that a large portion of the country, especially the highlands, does not have cell phone reception. (Phone numbers in this chapter that start with +27 are South African).

INTERNET - Internet connections in Lesotho are limited and generally slow. While usually suitable for general browsing and e-mail, it can be nearly impossible to load photos or videos.

ELECTRICITY - 220V/230V AC, 50Hz and three-pin plugs are used with round terminals, as in South Africa. European two-pin round plugs are commonly used as well.

EMERGENCY - Police & Emergency: 5888-1010 or 2231-7262

Maseru Average Temperatures and Rainfall



(LCD) party, which won the 1998 elections. Protesters cried election fraud. The capital city disintegrated into riots and looting as pro and anti-government forces clashed in the streets of Maseru. The government appealed to the South African Development Community (SADC) and the South African and Botswana militaries intervened to restore order.

After the violent upheavals in the late 1990s, the country has since restored a semblance of calm. Negotiations led to reforms in the parliamentary and electoral system. The 2002 elections were deemed free and fair and passed without violence. However the 2007 reelection of the LCD party and Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili spurred renewed violent protest and government repression of dissent.

Nation builders have since turned their attentions to Lesotho's two most important problems: widespread poverty and a citizenry overwhelmed by the spread of HIV and AIDS. Lesotho has the third highest infection rate in the world with over 23 percent of the population suffering from HIV/AIDS. The effects of the disease has compounded the country's economic hardships and disrupted the traditional family structure. Persistent social stigma and limited access to resources and treatment hinder efforts to combat the spread of the virus. How Lesotho deals with these two intertwined hardships will shape the future of the small, mountainous country and its proud, resilient people.

GEOGRAPHY

The small Kingdom of Lesotho is completely landlocked and entirely contained within the country of South Africa. Much of the country is covered by the towering Maluti Mountain range, cut by river valleys. The highest peak is located along the eastern border at 3,482 m above sea level, and the lowest point in the country sits at the junction of the Orange and Makhaleng Rivers at just over 1,400 m above sea level. Only slightly more than 10 percent of the country is arable land, most of which is located within the small strip of relatively flat terrain along the western border.

CLIMATE

Given its high altitude, Lesotho is much cooler than its surrounding countries and the weather can change quite rapidly. The summer season lasts from October to March and is characterized by hot days and more moderate evening temperatures with occasional rain. During winter, the temperature frequently dips below freezing in the lowlands and the highlands get varying amounts of snowfall with extremely cold nights. If you are traveling through the highlands or anywhere within Lesotho during the winter months, it is important to be prepared and have adequate gear for freezing temperatures.

PEOPLE

Lesotho is a very homogeneous country. Over 99 percent of the population is Sotho and the remaining population is made up of Africans, Europeans and Asians. Roughly 25 percent of the population lives in urban areas, and continual migration from the rural villages is driven by aspirations for employment. A description of the people of Lesotho would not be complete without mentioning the country's staggeringly high HIV rate. More than 23 percent of the population is infected with HIV, making Lesotho third in the world for the highest HIV infection rate, just behind Swaziland and Botswana, and just one place above neighboring South Africa. This high rate drastically reduces life expectancy, alters the traditional family structure and leaves many Lesotho children orphaned.

LANGUAGE

Lesotho's has two official languages: Sesotho (southern Sotho) and English. Everyone in the country speaks Sesotho and many people in the main cities have varying degrees of fluency in English. In the more rural mountain communities, English is far less common. To a lesser extent Zulu and Xhosa are also spoken.

CULTURE

Although geographically situated within South Africa, the proud Basotho people have a distinct culture, in part because they remain isolated up in the mountains, have maintained a largely homogeneous population, and have avoided any divisive apartheid-style rule. The traditional village

SPEAK SESOTHO

The easiest way to make friends in Lesotho is to pick up a few key words of Sesotho.

PLEASANTRIES

Hello.....	Dumela
How are you?.....	O kae?
I am fine.....	Ke teng
Goodbye (when remaining).....	Tsamaya hantl
Goodbye (when leaving).....	Sala hantle
Good luck.....	Ke o lakaletsa mohlohonolo
Have a safe journey.....	O tsamaye hantle.

NECESSITIES

Yes.....	Ee
No.....	Tjhee
Please.....	Hle
Thank you.....	Ke a leboha
Help.....	Thusang
Danger.....	Kotsi
Emergency.....	Tlokotsi
Excuse me.....	Tshwarelo
I am sorry.....	Ntshwarele
I love you.....	Ke a o rata.
How much is this?.....	Ke bokae?
I want.....	Ke batla ...
What are you doing?.....	O etsang?
The Sotho way of doing things.....	Se harona
Computer.....	Khomputa

E-mail address.....	Poso ya e-maili
Internet.....	Inthanete
Internet café.....	Khefi ya Inthanete

TIMING

Sunday.....	Sontaha
Monday.....	Mantaha
Tuesday.....	Labobedi
Wednesday.....	Laboraro
Thursday.....	Labone
Friday.....	Labohlano
Saturday.....	Moqebelo

NUMBERS

One.....	Nngwe
Two.....	Pedi
Three.....	Tharo
Four.....	Nne
Five.....	Hlano
Six.....	Tshelela
Seven.....	Supa
Eight.....	Robedi
Nine.....	Robong
Ten.....	Leshome

Festivals & Public Holidays

1 JANUARY.....	New Year's Day
11 MARCH.....	Moshoeshoe Day
LATE MARCH - EARLY APRIL.....	Good Friday (Friday before Easter Monday)
LATE MARCH - EARLY APRIL.....	Easter Monday
1 MAY.....	Workers Day
25 MAY.....	Hero's Day
MID-MAY.....	Ascension Day (celebrated 40 days after Easter Sunday)
17 JULY.....	King's Birthday
4 OCTOBER.....	Independence Day
EARLY OCTOBER.....	Morija Arts & Cultural Fest.
25 DECEMBER.....	Christmas Day
26 DECEMBER.....	Boxing Day

social structure still remains very much intact outside of cities. Villages are generally composed of multiple extended families that live together in a small collection of shared huts with communal responsibilities. The family structure is dominated by males, and especially in rural areas, women are tasked with farming, homemaking and cooking duties. A village chief allocates land to villagers, judges disputes, maintains order, and assigns punishment for those who break the law. In less populated regions, a headman is in charge of administering an area but is still under the authority of a chief. Possession of livestock - primarily cattle, ponies, sheep and goats - is important in Lesotho and represents status and wealth.

For a quintessential image of Lesotho, imagine a Basotho man wrapped in a Basotho blanket riding a Basotho pony. The Basotho blanket - a thick colorfully patterned wool blanket worn by everyone in the country, from shepherds to statesmen - is probably the single most visually identifiable marker of the Lesotho culture. The blanket has many utilitarian purposes. It can, for instance, provide warmth in the harsh cold and protection from the sun and rain, secure a baby safely to its mother's back, or be placed on the ground to lay or sit upon. But the Basotho blanket also has symbolic significance. It is worn to formal ceremonies and signals stages in life such as a boy's initiation into manhood.

The Basotho pony can be traced back to the Cape Horse and is known as a strong and surefooted breed that has good endurance and

is confident carrying people and supplies up and down the steep mountains. Even today with a more developed road network, many mountain villages can only be reached by foot or on a pony, so that just like a hundred years ago, the Basotho pony is still needed to sustain the community.

GOVERNMENT

The Kingdom of Lesotho is a parliamentary constitutional monarchy, with executive authority invested in the prime minister and legislative duties entrusted to a bicameral parliament. The upper house of parliament consists of 22 chiefs whose membership is hereditary, and 11 members appointed by the prime minister. The lower house of parliament is composed of 120 members that are elected for five-year terms; 80 are elected via a popular vote and the remaining 40 are elected through a proportional vote. The constitution provides for an independent judicial system; however in recent years, its degree of independence has been subject to criticism related to the appointment process. The King is a ceremonial figurehead only, a "living symbol of national unity" who has no executive powers and is prohibited from participating in the country's politics.

There are currently 10 political parties represented in the legislature. For the past 12 years, the dominant political party in Lesotho has been the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD, www.lcd.org.ls), which holds a majority of the elected legislative seats. The National Independent Party (NIP) is the second-largest represented party with just under one-fifth of the seats. The All Basotho Convention (ABC), which broke away from the ruling LCD party in 2006, is the third strongest party.

ECONOMY

The economy of the resource-scarce Lesotho is weak: the country's (nominal) per capita GDP stood at \$800 USD in 2009. It is hampered by the harsh conditions of the mountains, stunted by a lack of education, and eroded by corruption and the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The domestic economy is primarily based on subsistence agriculture and the raising of livestock,

both of which continue to be affected by land erosion and droughts.

Completely surrounded by South Africa, the country's economy is tightly linked with its neighbor. Many families within Lesotho have long-relied on remittances from family members who work in the mines in South Africa, but the availability of these jobs is decreasing. The country's largest export has long been textiles destined primarily for the American market. There are a handful of large textile factories in the country, but the industry was artificially buttressed by a quota system that has since been removed, and textiles are now facing tough competition. One of the country's few economic success stories is the massive exportation of its fresh water to South Africa through the Lesotho Highlands Water Project. Enormous infrastructure channels the fresh water from mountain dams through underground tunnels to a hydroelectric plant that generates enough power for the entire country of Lesotho. The water then flows into South Africa and in return for the steady stream of water, South Africa pays Lesotho roughly \$35 million per year.

The biggest economic hardships the country is saddled with are the destructive forces and skyrocketing costs associated with HIV/AIDS. Those who are sick are unable to work, and the costs of treating and caring for those infected with HIV is beyond what the government of Lesotho is able to manage.

NEWS & MEDIA

South African media, TV and radio stations are available within Lesotho and are superior in quality and their independent coverage. Domestic media is strongly controlled by the government, and the only national TV station and countrywide radio station are both state run. There are a handful of privately run low-powered regional radio stations as well as a few private weekly newspapers, but private media organizations are subject to some state controls, and criticism of the government by private media journalists and institutions is frequently reprimanded with lawsuits.

Lesotho Television, government-run, is the only

national TV station in the country.

Public Eye (www.publiceyenews.com) is the weekly government-run newspaper.

Mopheme, the leading independent newspaper, is occasionally critical of the Basotho government.

Radio Lesotho is the government-run national radio station.

SLEEPING

Within the capital city of Maseru there are a handful of accommodation options at all price ranges and varying standards. Outside of Maseru, the accommodation options are scarce and tend to fall in one of two buckets: either characterless hotels with conference facilities that cater to government or NGO conference attendees, or smaller well-run lodges geared toward tourism. It is in this second bucket where you will find some fantastic places to not just stay, but also to experience the culture and history of Lesotho. Malealea Lodge and Semonkong Lodge are two of the best-known establishments geared toward tourism, but there

are about a dozen very accommodating lodges throughout the country.

Camping is common, although it can be cold in the mountains and along hiking trails. If camping near a village in rural areas, be sure to ask permission from the village chief and offer a small financial contribution of about M25 for the privilege.

EATING & DRINKING

Maseru has a large variety of restaurants that serve both international and traditional food. Outside of Maseru most hotels and lodges serve meals, and even in the smaller communities there are generally a few local restaurants offering more traditional meals. Lesotho cuisine often includes staples such as maize, rice or cassava accompanied by tender meat or a saucy meat-based stew.

Nightlife options are plentiful in Maseru, but are limited outside of the capital to a few formal establishments in each town and a shebeen or two. The national beer of Lesotho is the crisp Maluti, but you can find all of the South African beers as well.



In smaller towns and rural areas, you'll notice a system of color-coded flags flying above buildings, which signals the food and beer for sale. A red flag means meat, a green flag means vegetables, and a white or yellow flag means beer – a white flag for traditional thick joala beer made from sorghum, and a yellow flag for maize beer.

TRANSPORTATION

Visas

Foreign nationals from the United States, the E.U., and most commonwealth countries do not need a visa to enter Lesotho. Visitors who are required to obtain a visa prior to entry can do so from the nearest Lesotho embassy or from within South Africa. Most entry permits into Lesotho are for 14 or 28 days. Visitors wishing to stay longer than their allotted time must apply for an extension from the **Department of Immigration** (S 29 18.566 E 027 29.149, cnr Assissi Rd & Moshoeshoe Rd, Maseru, 📞2232-2187). For a complete list of countries that don't need to obtain a visa to enter Lesotho see (http://www.lesothoemb-usa.gov.ls/services/visa_countries.php).

Air

Moshoeshoe I Airport - MSU (S 29 27.341 E 027 33.567, A2, Mazenod, 📞2235-0777) is located 20 km south of Maseru and is the only international airport in the country serviced by public carriers. **South African Airlink** (2235-0418, www.saaairlink.co.za) has three direct flights a day to Johannesburg (M2,200).

Roads

The road network in Lesotho is fairly basic. There are three major roads in the country that all meet at the main traffic circle in the capital city of Maseru. Kingsway is a 4 km road from South Africa into Maseru and is the country's main border crossing route. Kingsway Road cuts through the middle of Maseru and ends at the city's main traffic circle. The Main North Road (A1) heads toward Teyateyaneng and passes through a series of towns that dot the northern corridor. The Main South Road (A2) heads to Mafeteng and a handful of smaller southern towns. These two main paved arteries through the country support steady traffic, and are relatively good to travel on aside from the potholes, animals and accidents. Other than these two main

roads there are some more recently paved inland mountain roads that were upgraded to haul in supplies for construction of dams as part of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project. Unpaved roads are particularly subject to erosion and most are not suitable for low clearance vehicles.

Minibus Taxis

A network of minibus taxis is the most common method of transportation within the country and to nearby cities in South Africa. They congregate at minibus taxi ranks in towns throughout the county and leave as soon as they fill up with passengers. Larger buses also depart from some of the minibus taxi ranks and head to many of the mid-sized towns in the country, but they tend to operate on less frequent schedules.

HEALTH, SAFETY & SECURITY

Immunizations & Disease

In addition to being up to date with routine vaccinations such as measles/mumps/rubella (MMR), diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) and polio, the **US Centers for Disease Control – CDC** (wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/) recommends that travelers to Lesotho receive the following vaccinations: hepatitis A, hepatitis B, typhoid and rabies (for individuals with a high risk of exposure). Malaria is not present in Lesotho.

Although yellow fever is not a disease risk in Lesotho, the government requires travelers arriving from countries where yellow fever is present to show proof of a yellow fever vaccination.

Lesotho has the third-highest HIV/AIDS rate in the world, and more than 23 percent of the adult population is living with HIV/AIDS. International NGOs are the main educators and campaigners of HIV prevention, including condom distribution, behavioral change campaigns and prevention of mother-to-child transmission. Although condoms are widely distributed, use still remains unpopular and controversial. The Lesotho government has launched a handful of ambitious HIV testing and treatment campaigns in recent years; however lack of funding, education, training and organization has caused most of the efforts to be largely unsuccessful.

Hospitals

There are medical facilities in Maseru, but if you

need medical treatment you are better off going to South Africa. If you have a medical emergency in or around Maseru your best bet is to go to the **Maseru Private Hospital** (S 29 20.970 E 027 26.981, Ha Thetsane, 📞2231-3260).

Water

Tap water is generally safe to drink in the highlands. Locals in the lowlands drink tap water, but chances of contamination are much higher. Bottled water is recommended for travelers with sensitive stomachs or those wanting to play it safe.

Crime

Lesotho has a lower crime rate than most southern African countries, but crime is still high relative to developed nations. Incidents of petty street crime and occasional violence are most prevalent in Maseru and in the border towns. Walking around in Maseru at night is not recommended. Most crimes against tourists are opportunistic and it is a good idea to avoid wearing or displaying expensive possessions.

For tips on staying safe, check out Safety Tips on p60.

Police & Emergency (📞5888-1010 or 📞2231-7262).

SPECIALIZED TRAVEL NEEDS

Women

It is not unsafe for women to travel alone in Lesotho, but like anywhere else, women who are by themselves should be particularly careful. Though there are many friendly faces, it's not a good idea to walk alone after dark or accept rides from people

you are unacquainted with.

When visiting villages and rural areas, women are advised to wear a long skirt or full-length dress. It is not inappropriate to wear pants, but the effort to respect cultural norms is appreciated and you will be received more warmly.

Families

Lesotho's relaxed atmosphere makes it a good family destination. Many of the well-established lodges throughout the country offer family-friendly accommodation. Supplies from pharmacies, baby food and diapers are available in Maseru, but it is a good idea to take what you need with you when venturing anywhere outside of the capital city.

Disabled Travelers

Lesotho has extremely limited facilities for people with disabilities. Most public transport, accommodation and restaurants do not cater to those with special needs.

MASERU

GPS: S 29 18.763 E 027 28.695
pop. 250,000 | elevation 1,538 m/5,046 ft

Maseru (meaning "the place of red sandstone") hugs the South African border and is the capital of Lesotho. It's by far the most developed and largest city in the country and continues to expand as more people move to the area. Many visitors to Lesotho stop in Maseru for its selection of accommodation, restaurants, shops and modern conveniences but spend most of their time in the interior.



TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist Information Office (S 29 18.775 E 027 28.660, Kingsway Rd, 2231-2427, 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) has a helpful tourist brochure that covers Lesotho basics and the highlights of the country and includes a driving map. Other brochures for accommodation and activities throughout the country are available at this government-run gift and craft shop.

MONEY

FNB (S 29 18.796 E 027 28.766, Kingsway Rd, 8:30am-3:30pm Mon-Fri, 8:30am-11am Sat) has an ATM and bureau de change.

Standard Bank (S 29 18.859 E 027 28.968, Kingsway Rd, 8:30am-3:30pm Mon-Fri, 8:30am-12pm Sat) has ATMs and foreign exchange services.

INTERNET

Newland Internet Café (S 29 18.843 E 027 28.917, Moposo House, Kingsway Rd, 6227-7999, M6/30min) has 30 computers as well as a computer sales store and printing services. Laptops are also allowed to connect.

Data Kare (S 29 18.811 E 027 28.809, LNDC Centre, Kingsway Rd, 2232-6052, 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat-Sun, M10/30min) has eight dated computers as well as printing and photocopy services. Laptops can connect as well.

EMBASSIES / CONSULATES

Chinese Embassy (S 29 18.437 E 027 27.949, United Nations Rd, 2231-6521).

Dutch Consulate (S 29 18.867 E 027 28.837, Lancers Inn, Pioneer Rd, 2231-2114).

French Consulate (S 29 18.837 E 027 28.870, cnr Pioneer Rd & Kingsway Rd, 2232-5722).

German Consulate (S 29 18.182 E 027 28.527, 70c Maluti Rd, 2233-2292).

Irish Consulate (S 29 18.628 E 027 28.808, Tona-Kholo Rd, 2231-4068).

South African Consulate (S 29 18.634 E 027 28.597, cnr Kingsway Rd & Old School Rd, 2231-5758).

U.S. Embassy (S 29 18.387 E 027 28.097, 254 Kingsway Rd, 2231-2666).

POLICE & MEDICAL

Police & Emergency (5888-1010 or 2231-7262).

Maseru Private Hospital (S 29 20.970 E 027 26.981, Ha Thetsane, 2231-3260) is a small private clinic and the best place to go if you need immediate medical treatment. South Africa has far superior medical facilities.

SHOPPING

Basotho Hat (S 29 18.776 E 027 28.699, Kingsway Rd, 2232-2523, 8am-4:30pm Mon-Fri-Sat, 9am-3pm Sun) is a craft store with a good selection of traditional woven Basotho hats, masks, wood crafts and pottery.

Pioneer Mall (S 29 19.000 E 027 28.699, cnr Pioneer Rd and Maseru Bypass) is Lesotho's largest and newest shopping mall with a Pick 'n Pay, cinema, a number of chain restaurants and an FNB bank.

Shoprite (S 29 18.827 E 027 28.769, Kingsway Rd) is the largest store in the central downtown area and is surrounded by smaller shops and fast food stores.

Sefika Shopping Center (S 29 18.829 E 027 29.613, Moshoeshoe Rd) has a large Shoprite as well as a few clothing and department stores in the central business district.

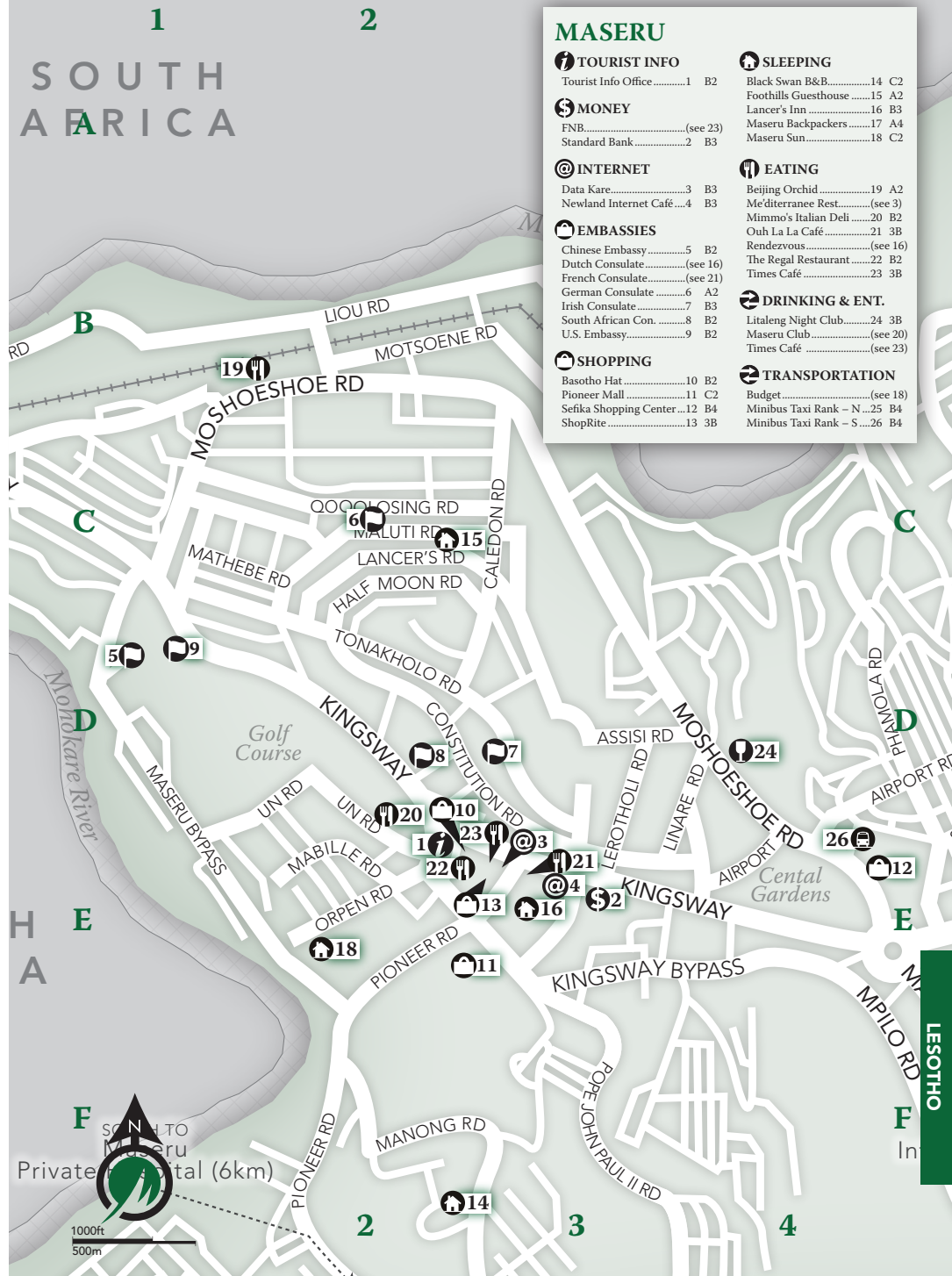
TOURS

Khotse Travel & Tours (2232-1080 or 5971-0444) can arrange anything from airport transfers to custom full-day tours to any number of attractions throughout the country.

SLEEPING

BUDGET

IMPACT Maseru Backpackers (S 29 17.779 E 027 30.382, Airport Rd, 2232-5166, www.durham-lesotholink.org.uk, camping M35/person, dm M100, private rondavel M440) is a basic facility run by the Lesotho Anglican Dioceses that hosts travelers in addition to providing outdoor activities and HIV/AIDS training for area children. There are a few six-bed dorm rooms and one luxury two-story self-catering rondavel. Basic meals can be prepared with advance notice. While a bit far from the city



center, there is a large grassy area to camp right on the lake. To get there, head out of town on Airport Rd and turn right about 200 m past the runway at the sign that says Lesotho Durham Link.

MID-RANGE

Foothills Guesthouse (S 29 18.196 E 027 28.638, 121 Maluti Rd, ☎5870-6566, melvin@xsinet.co.za, s M300, d M400) is a comfortable and well-maintained guesthouse in the residential Maseru West neighborhood with eight rooms and a separate self-catering unit. There is a central living room and sunroom where guests can eat breakfast (M40/person) or lounge during the day. At the large lapa and fire pit in the backyard, guests can braai and enjoy drinks.

Lancer's Inn (S 29 18.867 E 027 28.837, Pioneer Rd, ☎2231-2114, s M675, d M775, breakfast included, wifi, secured parking, swimming pool) is a centrally located 40-room lodge with good but standard rooms, each with AC, a TV and a small desk. Some of the rooms have a small deck that opens onto the courtyard swimming pool.

Black Swan B&B (S 29 19.509 E 027 28.724, 28 Manong Rd, ☎2231-7700 or ☎6305-6206, www.blackswan.co.ls, s M360-600, d M540-840, breakfast included, Internet) is a newer B&B located in a quiet residential neighborhood beside a small lake that attracts a number of birds – including black swans.

The clean rooms are all en suite with satellite TV, and there is a small indoor pool and fitness room onsite. A few of the rooms are self-catering, and there is a central gazebo with a braai outside.

TOP END

Maseru Sun (S 29 18.993 E 027 28.384, 12 Orpen Rd, ☎2231-2434, www.suninternational.com, standard M1,225, luxury M2,560, Internet/wifi, secured parking, swimming pool) is a 180-room hotel that is just slightly past its prime and ranks second only to its sister hotel the Lesotho Sun. The rooms have balconies surrounding a large courtyard swimming pool, and there is a restaurant and bar on the main level.

EATING

Mimmo's Italian Deli (S 29 18.738 E 027 28.520, Maseru Club, United Nations Rd, ☎2232-4979, 12pm-9:30pm Mon-Thu, 12pm-10:30pm Fri-Sat, 12pm-8:30pm Sun, mains M40-M80) has some tasty wood-fired thin crust pizza and a selection of pastas in a cozy atmosphere with a fireplace in the winter. It also has great sangria.

Rendezvous (S 29 18.874 E 027 28.851, Lancer's Inn, Kingsway Rd, ☎2231-2114, 7am-10:30pm, mains M50-90) is one of the fancier restaurants in town

with linen table cloths, a fireplace and a cocktail bar. The food is good, the atmosphere friendly, and the menu includes a handful of international dishes.

Times Café (S 29 18.804 E 027 28.786, LNDC Centre, Kingsway Rd, 7:30am-11pm Mon-Thu, 7:30am-12am Fri-Sat, 11:30am-9:30pm Sun, mains M50-90) is a second-story upmarket café, restaurant and bar overlooking Kingsway Road, with a good mix of local specialties and curries as well as burgers and sandwiches. In the evenings it is a mixed restaurant and bar scene.

The Regal Restaurant (S 29 18.785 E 027 28.685, Kingsway Rd, ☎2231-3930 or ☎5877-6847, 9am-9pm Mon-Sat, 12pm-3pm Sun, mains M50-80) is a second-story thatched roof restaurant with an outdoor verandah and a small café on the main level. The restaurant serves primarily Indian food but also has a small selection of Chinese food and grills.

Me'diterrane Restaurant (S 29 18.829 E 027 28.809, LNDC Centre, Pioneer Rd, ☎2832-9638, 7:30am-10pm, mains M30-70) is an outdoor café and espresso bar. It serves mostly pizza and a few Ethiopian dishes in addition to more standard fare.

Ouh La La Café (S 29 18.825 E 027 28.841, cnr Kingsway Rd & Pioneer Rd, ☎2832-3330, 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 7am-4pm Sat-Sun, light meals M20-30) brings a little bit of the French café lifestyle to Maseru. Small tables dot the outdoor garden, where you can enjoy a coffee, crepes, pastries and sandwiches as well as a selection of South African beer.

Beijing Orchid (S 29 17.922 E 027 28.261, Moshoeshoe Rd, ☎2231-6040 or ☎5816-1884, 9:30am-late, mains M25-50) serves up heaping portions of authentic Chinese food at value prices in an unpretentious atmosphere. On weekend evenings the side rooms in the back hall break out with some serious Beijing-style karaoke.

DRINKING & ENTERTAINMENT

Maseru Club (S 29 18.738 E 027 28.520, United Nations Rd, ☎2232-6008, 9:30am-9:30pm) is the city's gentlemen's bar and sports club where locals, businessmen and expats come to unwind over drinks or to catch a sports game. The official policy is members only, but it is loosely enforced and if you're passing through you should be able to enjoy a few drinks.

Times Café (S 29 18.804 E 027 28.786, LNDC Centre, Kingsway Rd, 7:30am-11pm Mon-Thu,

7:30am-12am Fri-Sat, 11:30am-9:30pm Sun) is an upmarket bar and cocktail lounge in town on the main drag. It has an outdoor deck overlooking Kingsway Road.

Litaleng Night Club (S 29 18.648 E 027 29.299, Moshoeshoe Rd, ☎5900-4071, 8:30am-11pm Mon-Thu, 9am-late Fri-Sat, 1am-late Sun) is a new club off of Moshoeshoe Road near the central bank. It is a fairly basic establishment but draws a large crowd that packs the outdoor courtyard on the weekend. Have fun but watch your pockets.

TRANSPORTATION

Air

Moshoeshoe I Airport - MSU (S 29 27.341 E 027 33.567, A2, Mazenod, ☎2235-0777) is located 20 km south of Maseru. **South African Airlink** (2235-0418, www.saaairlink.co.za) has three direct flights a day to Johannesburg (M2,200).

Mission Aviation Fellowship (☎2232-5699) offers charter flights to airstrips throughout much of the country including, Mokhotlong, Thaba-Tseka and Katse.

Car Rental

Avis (S 29 27.341 E 027 33.567, Moshoeshoe I Airport, A2, Mazenod, ☎2235-0328) has an office at the Moshoeshoe I airport.

Budget (S 29 18.993 E 027 28.384, Maseru Sun Hotel, 12 Orpen Rd, ☎2231-6344) has an office downtown as well as at the Moshoeshoe I airport.

Bosotho Car Rental (☎2231-4123 or ☎5885-7225) is a locally owned car hire service.

Minibus Taxi

Minibus Taxi Rank – North (S 29 18.848 E 027 29.925, Market St) has transport heading north including Maputsoe (45min, M25), Leribe (M40) and Butha-Buthe (M52).

Minibus Taxi Rank – South (S 29 18.765 E 027 29.584, Tlebere Rd) is located behind the Sefika Shopping Center with transport heading south including Mafeteng (45min, M25), Roma (45min, M13), Semonkong (3hr, M25) and Quthing (2.5hr, M50).

Taxis

Moonlite Taxis (☎2231-2695) is a reliable taxi service and is recommended if traveling at night in the city.





AROUND MASERU

There are a number of historical sights and country lodges within a short drive from Maseru that are convenient, entertaining destinations. Many can easily be visited on a day trip from Maseru, but staying overnight in one of these small towns that surround the big city is by far the best way to experience this area.

THABA-BOSIU

GPS: S 29 20.793 E 027 39.838
elevation 1,607 m/5,272 ft

Thaba-Bosiu is the most significant and revered historical site in the country. The mountain, with its steep cliffs and flat top, was the place where Lesotho's first king, Moshoeshoe I, established his stronghold in 1824. From this vantage point the king and his men successfully defended the land against numerous attacks. King Moshoeshoe I and his successors are buried atop the mountain at the royal burial grounds.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Visitor Information Center (S 29 20.784 E 027 39.829, B31, ☎2235-7207, 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) has a few brochures for area accommodation and a basic list of activities to do throughout the country. There are also shaded picnic tables and braai stands beside the visitor

center that are available for public use. The visitor center offers 1.5hr guided tours (8:30am, 10:30am & 2:30pm, M10/person) up the mountain to the remains of the village where Moshoeshoe lived and to the royal graveyard where King Moshoeshoe I and other royal members are buried.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Thaba-Bosiu Mountain (S 29 20.989 E 027 40.241) was the strategic center of the Lesotho Kingdom during the mid-1800s, and a defensive power, believed to repel attacks. The name Thaba-Bosiu means "mountain of the night" and local legend maintains that during the night the mountain grows, making it far more difficult to ascend than appears by day. The mountain is located just off the main road directly across the street from the visitor information center. Visitors are free to hike and explore the mountain on their own or with a tour guide from the visitor information center.

SLEEPING & EATING

IMPACT Nonakeng Backpackers (S 29 21.288 E 027 39.144, B31, ☎5896-2461 or ☎5890-0744, montica05@yahoo.com, s M80, d M160) is run by a former Peace Corps volunteer who has made Lesotho her home. Hosts Rose and Kenney run a school and daycare center for children between 2-6 years old – many of whom are orphaned or HIV positive – and work very hard to clothe, educate and feed as many children as possible. Accommodation is in clean but basic, off-the-grid rondavels. The electricity is entirely solar powered, and while at the moment it's just bucket baths, construction on showers is underway. Even if you are not planning on staying here, it's worth stopping by to see the amazing work that is being done in this community.

Mmelesi Lodge (S 29 21.002 E 027 39.636, B31, ☎5886-1115, s M360, d M500, secure parking) is located at the foothill of the Thaba-Bosiu Mountain. It has a main central lodge with a large restaurant and bar as well as 26 neat and tightly packed en suite stone and thatched roof rondavels dotting a well-manicured lawn.

Cultural Village (S 29 20.822 E 027 39.787, B31) is the largest tourist development in the country with 40 rondavels, a museum, amphitheatre, restaurant and bar. At the time of research the government-funded cultural center had just been completed and the Ministry of Tourism had yet to transfer management over to a private party to open and run the venue. It is located next to the Visitor Information Center.

TRANSPORTATION

Minibus Taxis drive along the main B31 road in both directions and also travel to Maseru (M10).

ROMA

GPS: S 29 27.089 E 027 43.238
elevation 1,693 m/5,554 ft

Surrounded by sandstone hills, Roma is a small valley town that was established by missionaries in the 1860s. A number of missionary groups eventually founded various educational institutions in the area. Roma is home to Lesotho's only university, the National University of Lesotho.

MONEY

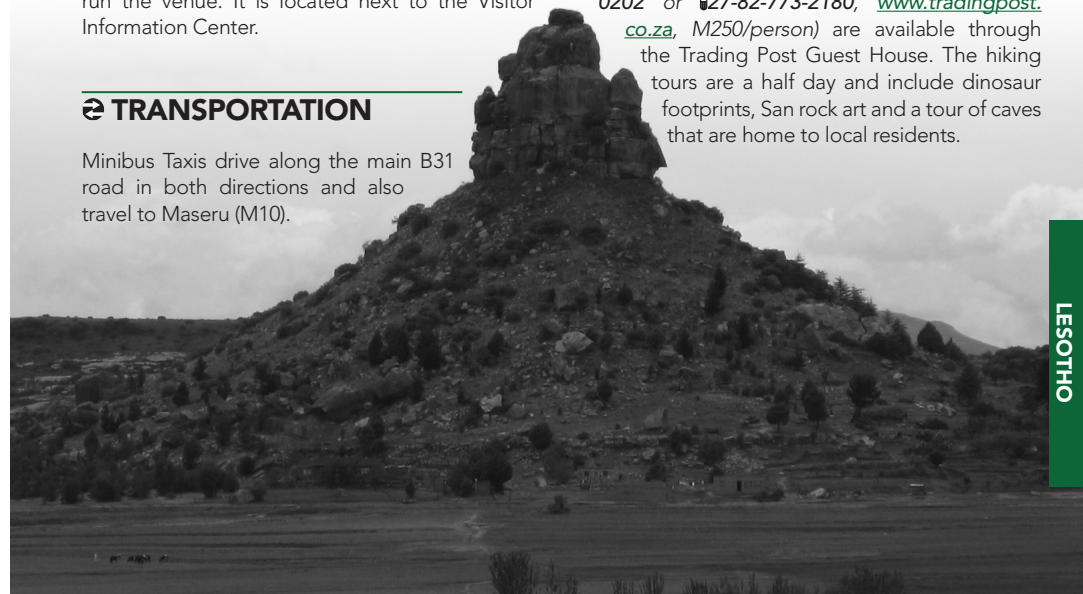
Nedbank (S 29 27.087 E 027 43.253, A5) has a branch with ATMs located just outside the main entrance of the National University of Lesotho.

INTERNET

Surprisingly, as of 2010 there was not a functioning Internet café in this university town. If you need to get online you can try popping inside the National University of Lesotho.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Cave and Dinosaur Footprint Tours (S 29 26.547 E 027 42.201, Trading Post Guest House, A5, ☎2234-0202 or ☎27-82-773-2180, www.tradingpost.co.za, M250/person) are available through the Trading Post Guest House. The hiking tours are a half day and include dinosaur footprints, San rock art and a tour of caves that are home to local residents.



🏠 SLEEPING, EATING & DRINKING

Trading Post Guest House (S 29 26.547 E 027 42.201, A5, ☎2234-0202 or ☎27-82-773-2180, www.tradingpost.co.za, camping M75/person, dm M125, s M175, d M350, swimming pool) is one of the most pleasant and relaxing places to stay in Lesotho. It was established by John Thorn in 1903 and the main building still stands today, along with a handful of rondavels and well-kept rooms that dot the expansive property. Homemade meals are available with advance notice or there is a self-catering kitchen and braai stands outside.

Kaycees (S 29 27.064 E 027 43.185, A5, 8am-late, mains M15-60) is a basic establishment located across the street from the university, where fish, chicken and burgers are served. On the weekends when school is in session, this place fills up with young students out for a beer and a good time.

🚗 TRANSPORTATION

Minibus Taxis gather outside of the main entrance of the National University of Lesotho and head to Maseru (M20).

MOHALE DAM

GPS: S 29 27.486 E 028 05.755
elevation 2,075 m/6,808 ft

Mohale is a small town that was built as a base for the companies and employees involved in the construction of the Mohale Dam. The town is mostly occupied by rows of boxy prefabricated worker housing tenements, although one of the larger buildings has been converted into a lodge to host visitors who come to see the dam.

🌟 SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Mohale Dam (S 29 27.486 E 028 05.755) is a 145-meter-high dam built in 2004 as part of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project. It shares a 32 km underground tunnel with the Katse Dam, from where the water is used to create hydroelectricity and is then diverted into neighboring South Africa. Compared to the sleek Katse Dam, the Mohale Dam is an unsightly rock-filled hill covered in concrete. Tours are available from the **Visitor Information Center** (S 29 27.706 E 028 06.334, ☎2293-6217, 8am-12pm & 1pm-4pm

Mon-Fri, 9am-12pm Sat-Sun, tours M10) and cover the history of the project and a tour of the dam at 9am and 2pm on weekdays and at 11am on weekends. To get there from the Mohale Camp, head 2 km south on the A3 and turn left. Continue for 4 km and take another left. The visitor center is 2 km ahead where the road ends.

Boat Tours (☎2293-6432 or ☎2231-2238, mohaleboating@ltdc.org.ls, adult M60, child M45) offer a 2hr tour around the Mohale Dam including a visit to the dam wall and the Thaba-Chitja island. Departure times vary based on bookings.

🏠 SLEEPING

Orion Mohale Lodge (S 29 28.705 E 028 03.691, ☎2293-6432, www.oriongroup.co.za/mohale-overview.html, s M600, d M1,000, breakfast included, swimming pool), once workers' housing, was taken over by the Orion Hotel chain and converted into a lodge. Set on the edge of the small town atop a hill overlooking the valley, the lodge offers pleasant but somewhat bare rooms, an onsite restaurant and bar. There are tennis courts and the lodge can organize fishing, boating and pony treks through the surrounding valleys.

🚗 TRANSPORTATION

A number of minibus taxis and buses drive the Maseru-to-Thaba-Tseka route daily and it is possible to catch them passing on the A3.

SEMONKONG

GPS: S 29 50.415 E 028 03.082
elevation 2,219 m/7,280 ft

Semonkong (meaning "Place of Smoke") was established in the 1880s as a refuge for Basotho villagers who were displaced by the conflict during the Gun War. Despite being in the middle of the mountains and a bit hard to access (unless you have a 4x4), it has one of the country's top lodges and it attracts a steady stream of visitors who come to experience the pony treks, hikes, abseiling and waterfalls.

🌟 SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Pony Treks (S 29 50.614 E 028 02.608, *Semonkong Lodge*, ☎2700-6037 or ☎6202-1021, www.placeofsmoke.co.ls, M175-250) are a popular way of getting around in the mountains and guided day trips can include picnics, traversing rivers and waterfalls, and interacting with villagers. Overnight treks (M350-500) include riding to one of the mountain villages and spending the night in a traditional village hut. Longer multi-day treks can also be arranged.

Guided Hiking (S 29 50.614 E 028 02.608, *Semonkong Lodge*, ☎2700-6037 or ☎6202-1021, www.placeofsmoke.co.ls, M175-250) can be done with locals to popular destinations including Maletsunyane Falls, mountain tops, village visits and even to the hut of the local sangoma, or traditional healer.

Abseiling (S 29 50.614 E 028 02.608, *Semonkong Lodge*, ☎2700-6037 or ☎6202-1021, www.placeofsmoke.co.ls, M700-850) down the 204-meter-high Maletsunyane Falls is generally a two-day event. The first half-day involves getting familiar with the equipment and techniques while training on smaller 25-meter cliffs. The big descent down the waterfall is the following morning. It's an absolute thrill to glide down over 600 feet beside the plunging water, but not something for the faint-hearted.

Maletsunyane Falls (S 29 52.095 E 028 03.092) drops 204 m down into a large pool. You can observe the falls from above or hike down to the bottom, where you can swim in the pool under the crashing waterfall. The top of the waterfall is about a 3.5 km hike from the Semonkong Lodge.

Ketane Falls (S 29 52.920 E 027 54.490) drops more than 100 m into a gorge located deep in rural mountains. Located about 20 km from the Semonkong Lodge, the falls can easily be reached on an overnight pony trek.

🛏 SLEEPING & EATING

Semonkong Lodge (S 29 50.614 E 028 02.608, ☎2700-6037 or ☎6202-1021, www.placeofsmoke.co.ls, camping M70, dm M110, s M330-385, d M560-600) is one of the top lodges in Lesotho and the base of accommodation and activities for most visitors to town. The lodge works with members of the local community to offer guided pony trekking,

hiking and abseiling down the Maletsunyane Falls. Accommodation is in an assortment of solid stone and thatched roof buildings or rondavels. There is a pub and a full restaurant serving hearty meals, as well as a self-catering kitchen. The lodge is located on the Maletsunyane River about 700 m from the A5 road.

🚗 TRANSPORTATION

There are minibus taxis that make the drive to and from Maseru as well as a daily bus from Maseru. Every Tuesday and Friday Semonkong Lodge runs a free shuttle bus from the tourist information office in Maseru. Call ahead to book a spot.

MORIJA

GPS: S 29 37.571 E 027 30.528
elevation 1,669 m/5,476 ft

Morija is Lesotho's cultural and historical capital. It was the site of the first European mission to Lesotho, witnessed the country's first printing press and houses Lesotho's oldest building and only museum. Every year in October the town hosts the Morija Arts & Cultural Festival (www.morijafest.com).

🌟 SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Morija Museum & Archives (S 29 37.577 E 027 30.512, ☎2236-0308, www.morijafest.com, 8am-5pm Mon-Sat, 12pm-5pm Sun, adult M10, child M3) preserves the rich history of the country and the Morija area with displays on the history of the formation of the Basotho nation in Lesotho, information on the early missionaries in the country and archives of their original publications. There are also sandstone slabs containing dinosaur footprints. Behind the museum is a tearoom restaurant where you can enjoy drinks or a meal under the sun.

Dinosaur Footprint Tour (1hr, M50/person) is a guided hike to a series of dinosaur footprints located in the hills near the museum. The Mission History Tour (2hr, M50/person) covers the missionary printing press, church, book center, schools and hospital. These tours are run by staff at the **Morija Museum & Archives** (S 29 37.577 E 027 30.512, ☎2236-0308, www.morijafest.com, 8am-5pm Mon-

Sat, 12pm-5pm Sun).

Pony Trekking (S 29 37.965 E 027 30.781, *Morija Guest Houses*, ☎2236-0306 or ☎6306-5093, www.morijaguesthouses.com, M250/half-day, M350/day) can be arranged through Morija Guest Houses and can include dinosaur footprint visits and treks to mountain villages. Overnight trips where you sleep in a traditional hut in a nearby mountain village can also be arranged.

🛏 SLEEPING

Morija Guest Houses (S 29 37.965 E 027 30.781, ☎2236-0306 or ☎6306-5093, www.morijaguesthouses.com, camping M60/person, s M190-220, d M380-440) is a beautiful stone and thatched roof hillside lodge on the outskirts of Morija. The main lodge has eight rooms, a living room and a dining room where hearty homemade meals are served. Breakfast, lunch and dinner can be provided with advance notice. Next door to the main lodge there are a couple of private, self-catering cottages. The quiet surroundings of the grounds are perfect for walking or hiking, and guided hikes to nearby dinosaur footprints as well as pony treks (M90/hr or M250/half day) can

be arranged. Backpackers who arrive by public transport receive a discounted accommodation rate of M120. To get there, continue past the Museum and follow the white stones along the road to the guesthouse.

🍴 EATING

Lindy's Catering (S 29 37.388 E 027 29.853, ☎2236-0222, 8am-6pm Mon-Sat, mains M15-25) is a small restaurant with a selection of basic but tasty prepared meals made by Lindy. The selection varies from day to day but usually includes pap, vegetables and meat. It is located on the main tar road into Morija just 200 m from the A2.

🚗 TRANSPORTATION

Minibus Taxis (S 29 37.328 E 027 29.775, A2) pick up and drop off at the intersection of the main road and the A2 with transport heading south and north to Maseru (45min, M14). If you get dropped off at the intersection you can wait for an incoming minibus, hire a local taxi (called a "4 plus 1"), or walk the 1.5 km into central Morija.





SOUTHERN LESOTHO

Southern Lesotho is a vast expanse of rural farmland and grassy rolling hills that is less developed than northern Lesotho. Although there are a handful of small commercial centers that dot the border, they seem more economically linked with towns in neighboring South Africa than with the rest of Lesotho. This is the perfect region to jump on a pony or set out on foot and trek to remote villages where you can experience the traditional way of life that many people in Lesotho still lead.

MALEALEA

GPS: S 29 49.734 E 027 35.976
elevation 1,821 m/5,974 ft

Malealea is a small mountain village in the southwestern part of the country. Few visitors would head to Malealea if it weren't for the century-old, former trading post turned lodge that has become one of the country's top attractions. The Malealea Lodge has integrated and involved the local community in its development, and owners have in turn established the Malealea Development Trust to support projects within the community.

🌿 SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Pony Treks (2-6hr, M170-260) are a popular way of getting around in the mountains. Guided day trips can include San rock art visits, crossing rivers, climbing waterfalls and meeting with villagers. On an overnight trek (M400-430, min 2 people), you can ride to a mountain village and spend the night in a traditional village hut. Longer multiday treks can also be arranged.

Guided Hiking (3-6hr, M30-60/person) is a good option if you want to visit popular destinations such as Pitseng Canyon with a local, or experience more secret spots like a calm rock pool or

breathtaking overhang.

Sangoma Visits (M20/person) include a trek into a local village to meet with the traditional healer, where you can get questions answered about your health or life in general and receive traditional herbal remedies.

🏠 SLEEPING & EATING

IMPACT Malealea Lodge (S 29 49.734 E 027 35.976, ☎27-82-552-4215, www.malealea.co.ls, camping M70/person, backpackers hut M120-M140/person, s M200-250, d M400-500) is a quality lodge that is well integrated with the community and serves as the single base for activities and accommodation in Malealea. There is a farmhouse, numerous huts, and en suite rondavels spread throughout the premises. Electricity is generator-powered and is usually only on between 6pm-10pm. Breakfast and lunch are available, and hearty meals are cooked up at the lodge for dinner every night, although self-catering facilities are also available. The Malealea band and Malealea choir perform outside for the lodge guests most nights, and there is a separate bar that can get pretty lively in the evenings.

🚌 TRANSPORTATION

Minibus Taxis operate between Malealea and Maseru (2.5hr, M30).

If driving from Maseru, head south out of town on the Mafeteng Rd / A2 for 50 km to Motsekua (S 29 41.458 E 027 26.147) and follow the Malealea Lodge sign east for 10 km to where the road forks (S 29 44.578 E 027 31.026) just before Makhakhe. Take the right and continue 15 km where there will be a signed turnoff (S 29 50.364 E 027 32.158) onto a gravel road. Take that left and continue 7 km to the lodge.

MAFETENG

GPS: S 29 49.350 E 027 14.633

pop. 60,000 | elevation 1,666 m/5,466 ft

Mafeteng (meaning "the place of the passersby") is a small but bustling border town located 17 km from the Van Rooyenshek border crossing (open 6am-10pm) that links up with the town of Wepener in the Free State. This industrial town is the capital of the district and although the largest city in the southern half of the country, it has few attractions.



MONEY

Nedbank (S 29 49.365 E 027 14.606, A2) is located downtown on the A2 near the town's main intersection with B26, and has an ATM.

SHOPPING

Shoprite Shopping Center (S 29 49.427 E 027 14.814, B26) has a Shoprite, ATMs, and a handful of local stores.

SLEEPING

Hotel Mafeteng (S 29 49.215 E 027 14.447, Hospital Rd, ☎2270-0236 or ☎2270-0438, s M300-420, d M395-480) is the better quality of the two hotels in town with larger, brighter and better-scented rooms. The two-story hotel has a swimming pool and a handful of freestanding cottages in back. There is also a restaurant and a bar attached to the hotel. To get there, turn north onto the road located 200 m east of the only traffic circle in town (where the A20 intersects with the A2); the hotel will be on your right 200 m up the road.

Golden Hotel (S 29 49.154 E 027 14.748, A2, ☎2270-0566, s

M280, d M360, secure parking) is a roadside hotel located on the A2 about 400 m north of the city center with 25 basic, dated, but secure rooms with a heater and TV. There is an attached restaurant and bar with a large menu including a good selection of pizzas.

EATING

Golden Hotel Restaurant (S 29 49.154 E 027 14.748, Golden Hotel, A2, ☎2270-0566, 7am-10pm, mains M20-50) is a clean sit-down restaurant that is known for its pizza but also serves traditional meals, pasta, fish and steak.

Hotel Mafeteng (S 29 49.215 E 027 14.447, Hospital Rd, ☎2270-0236 or ☎2270-0438, 6:30am-11pm, mains M50-80) offers a set breakfast, lunch and dinner meal as well as a small selection of grilled meat, all in a pleasant semi-formal dining room.

DRINKING & ENTERTAINMENT

Disco Bar (S 29 49.215 E 027 14.447, Hotel Mafeteng, Hospital Rd, ☎2270-0236 or ☎2270-0438, 5pm-late Fri-Sat) is the place to drink on Friday and Saturday in Mafeteng. During the week the smaller bars at both of the town's hotels are open but generally don't pull in large crowds.



TRANSPORTATION

Minibus Taxi Rank (S 29 49.356 E 027 14.770, B26) has bus and minibus transport to Quthing (M40), Mphahle's Hoek (M18), Maseru (M35) and Morija (M15).

QUTHING

GPS: S 30 24.005 E 027 42.041
pop. 15,000 | elevation 1,517 m/4,977 ft

Quthing is the capital town of the district and the southernmost town in Lesotho. It is located about 20 km from the Tele Bridge border crossing (open 6am-10pm) that joins the country with the Eastern Cape. The area around Quthing has a number of San rock art paintings and exposed dinosaur footprints.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Masitise Cave House Museum (S 30 24.301 E 027

38.595, off of A4, ☎5875-8187, 8:30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8:30am-2pm Sat-Sun, adult M10, child M3) is a cave that was sealed and turned into a family home in 1866 by Reverend David Frederic Ellenberger. The cave has a negative dinosaur footprint in the ceiling, a natural spring water source, and the reverend's son Edmond buried in one of the walls. Today the cave is a museum that displays artifacts from the Morija Museum of Archives and tells the story of Rev. Ellenberger's 55 years in Lesotho. It is located just off the A4 on a dirt road that is about 5 km west of the Quthing turnoff and has a sign for the Masitise Primary School. Continue 1 km on the dirt road past the school and church. The family or a volunteer living in the house beside the church can take you on a short walk to the cave.

Dinosaur Footprints (S 30 23.698 E 027 41.586, A4, 8am-4pm, M5) can easily be seen beside the road just outside of Quthing. There is a "Dinosaur Footprints" sign and an enclosed tin roof structure located on the A4, about 450 m east of the Quthing turnoff. You can walk on elevated walkways over the rock to view the numerous prehistoric footprints.



SLEEPING

Fuleng Guest House (S 30 24.001 E 027 42.253, 22275-0260 or 6278-2779, s M250-400, d M300-600) is perched on a hillside with a number of recently built thatched roof rondavels and cottages as well as a few rooms in the main building. All of the rooms have a TV and heater, and there is a large central lapa and braai pit overlooking lower Quthing. The guesthouse owner is outgoing and welcoming and can prepare meals for guests with advance notice. It is located about 1.4 km from the A4 on the main road into Quthing.

Mountain Side Hotel (S 30 24.012 E 027 42.429, 2275-0017 or 2275-0257, s M450, d M550, breakfast included, secure parking) has basic but decent sized rooms, a restaurant and two pubs. The rooms in the main lodge are brighter and larger than the windowless rooms in the building in back. It is located 300 m up the dirt road from the Fuleng Guest House.

EATING

Mafikeng Restaurant (S 30 24.042 E 027 41.679, mains M25-40) serves traditional food, fish, and grills, but doesn't always keep regular hours. It is located about 400 m from the A4 on the main road into Quthing.

TRANSPORTATION

Minibus Taxi Rank (S 30 23.884 E 027 41.485, A4) is located near the intersection of the A4 and the road into Quthing, with transport to Maseru (M65) and Qacha's Nek (M75).

QACHA'S NEK

GPS: S 30 07.078 E 028 41.069
elevation 1,950 m/6,398 ft

Qacha's Nek is a border town, located 2 km north of the Eastern Cape. It was established in 1888 and named after Ncatya, the son of chief Moorosi, who ruled over much of southern Lesotho in the early 1800s. Today there are a handful of historic buildings that remain, but other than hiking in the surrounding mountains there isn't much to keep visitors here. It is the last sizeable town to stock up in for those continuing on to the east.

SLEEPING & EATING

Anna's B&B (S 30 06.876 E 028 40.862, 22295-0374, annasb&b@leo.col.ls, s M100-150, d M180-280, Internet) has clean en suite rooms in a new building as well as more dated rooms with shared bathrooms in the original building. There is a self-catering kitchen or meals can be prepared with advance notice. It is located on the main road to Quthing, 800 m northeast of the traffic circle.

Letloepe Lodge (S 30 07.317 E 028 41.482, 22295-0383 or 6301-2310, dm M140, s M285, d M420-520, breakfast included) is favored by many for its clean and comfortable rooms and good restaurant. It is located on the edge of town with a killer view over the city and a number of accommodation options including a handful of freestanding rondavels beside the main building. To get there, head uphill from the traffic circle and follow the signs.

Nthathua Hotel (S 30 06.778 E 028 40.657, 22295-0260, s M320-460, d M400-550, breakfast included, secured parking) is another option on the northern end of town with a variety of en suite rooms, all with TV. Inside the hotel, a pub and a sit-down restaurant are popular with the local crowd.

TRANSPORTATION

Minibus Taxi Rank (S 30 07.051 E 028 41.058) has transport to surrounding cities including Maseru (M100) and Qacha's Nek border crossing (7am-8pm). There is also a bus (5hr, M50), between Qacha's Nek and Mavuka Village, 13 km from the Sehlabathebe Park Lodge.

SEHLABATHEBE

NATIONAL PARK
GPS: S 29 52.134 E 029 06.976
elevation 2,410 m/7,907 ft

Sehlabathebe National Park (S 29 52.134 E 029 06.976, admission free) was established in 1969 as Lesotho's first national park and is today a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The 650 square kilometer park is located in the far southeastern part of the country along the eastern Maluti Drakensberg escarpment. It borders the Drakensberg nature reserves in KwaZulu-Natal. A diverse ecosystem spans these mountain ridges that are teeming with birdlife, where rock overhangs and natural arches give way to grassy valleys, rivers, lakes and waterfalls. Visitors can explore the park on day hikes from the main lodge or on longer overnight hikes with camping gear.

SLEEPING

Sehlabathebe Park Lodge (S 29 52.134 E 029 06.976, 22231-1767 or 22232-6075, camping M30/person, dm M80) was originally built as a trout-fishing lodge for the Prime Minister of Lesotho in 1970. Today it sleeps up to 12 people with a fully equipped self-catering kitchen. There are campsites near the lodge and camping is permitted throughout the park.

TRANSPORTATION

The easiest way to get to the park from within Lesotho is driving from Qacha's Nek (which takes roughly 4hr) along the dirt A4 to **Mavuka Village** (S 29 53.926 E 029 03.049) where you turn off and head northeast. From the village it is about 13 km to the Sehlabathebe Park Lodge. If driving into the park, a 4x4 is usually necessary. Public transport is an option between Qacha's Nek and Mavuka Village on a daily bus (5hr, M50).

It is also possible to hike into the park from Bushman's Nek in KwaZulu-Natal over the Nkonkoana border crossing to the Sehlabathebe Park Lodge (14 km).

Stay In Low Gear On All
Descents Brake Failures
Have Killed

NORTHERN LESOTHO

Northern Lesotho stretches from Maseru to Butha-Buthe and is the most developed region in the country. Cities are spread throughout the lowlands, nestled between the mountains in central Lesotho and the Caledon River that forms the border. It is a good region to spend a day exploring, but most of the accommodation within the cities is fairly sterile and more suitable to hosting conferences for government employees.

TEYATEYANENG

GPS: S 29 09.069 E 027 44.550
elevation 1,710 m/5,610 ft

Teyateyaneng, or commonly called TY for short, means “the place of quick sands” because of the continuous shifting of the nearby river. It is also the craft capital of Lesotho. Hand-woven mohair products are the biggest hit in this town, and a number of craft shops sell detailed tapestries, bags and scarves in front showrooms while women work their craft in the back.

☎ MONEY

Standard Lesotho Bank (S 29 08.987 E 027 44.516) has an ATM and is located on the road to Blue Mountain Inn.

@ INTERNET

KAP Internet Café (S 29 08.992 E 027 44.500, ☎2850-0860, 6am-9pm, M4/15min) has three computers for Internet use and has wifi for laptops. It is located on the road to Blue Mountain Inn across the street from the Standard Lesotho Bank.

✳ SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Helang Basali (S 29 09.025 E 027 43.303, A1, ☎5890-2261, 8am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun) is a collective of about 10 women who weave together in a building at St Agnes Mission. They mostly work with mohair, but also craft some wool tapestries, rugs, scarves and bags. Guests are more than welcome to come see these women working on various stages of the detailed production process.

The turnoff, located about 2.5 km west of the city center, is signed as Helang Basali Craft Weaving.

Setsoto Design (S 29 08.917 E 027 44.378, ☎5808-6312, www.setsotodesign.com, 8am-5pm) is a larger production with about 35 women crafters and a good selection of wall hangings and rugs in the show room. Credit cards are accepted. It is located on a side road, one block east of the Blue Mountain Inn.

Eleloang Basali (S 29 07.457 E 027 45.383, ☎5851-0992, 8am-5pm) is comprised of a small group of energetic women cranking out mohair rugs, tapestries, handbags and table placemats in a small building. It has recently moved to a new location on the A1, 4 km north of the city center.

Hatooa Mose Mosali (S 29 08.663 E 027 43.221, A1, ☎2250-0772 or ☎5855-9916) is another small mohair weaving shop located about 300 m west of the Helang Basali turnoff on the opposite side of the road.

🛏 SLEEPING, EATING & DRINKING

Ka Pitseng Guest House (S 29 08.952 E 027 43.979, A1, ☎2250-1638 or ☎6284-5226, s M430, d M600-750, breakfast included) has 13 clean rooms in a few separate buildings, all with TVs. It is a fine place if you're just looking for sleep, but you will have to bring the atmosphere with you. The main building has a basic restaurant (8am-11pm, mains M45-65) and bar, and there are shaded seating areas outside. It is located on the A1, about 1.5 km west of the city center.

Blue Mountain Inn (S 29 08.857 E 027 44.481, ☎2250-0362, s M560, d M600-800, breakfast included, swimming pool), the most popular accommodation option in town, is situated in a large hotel complex with 70 rooms, a restaurant and two pubs. It's within easy walking distance of the city center, the rooms are clean with standard appointments, and the restaurant is the best in town.

Blue Mountain Pub & Restaurant (S 29 08.857 E 027 44.481, Blue Mountain Inn, ☎2250-0362, 10am-10pm Mon-Thu, 10am-1pm Fri-Sun, mains M50-70) is a proper

restaurant that is known for its pizza but has a variety of meals on offer, including a good selection of steak and fish. Meals can be served in the more formal dining room or in the cocktail bar. The pub is in a separate building and has a few pool tables and a steady stream of beer drinkers.

🚗 TRANSPORTATION

Minibus Taxi Rank (S 29 08.909 E 027 45.046, B12) is located near the city center on the B12, about 200 m from the intersection with the A1.

LERIBE

GPS: S 28 52.263 E 028 02.607
elevation 1,646 m/5,400 ft

Leribe (or Hlotse) was established by a British missionary in 1876 and today is a bustling market town with a few crumbling colonial buildings left over from the town's roughly 100 years as a administrative center under the British. Leribe is also the turnoff point for an interior road heading over the Maluti Mountains to the Bokong Nature Reserve and the Katse Dam.

MONEY

Nedbank (S 28 52.366 E 028 02.536) is located on the main road through the city center and has an ATM. A Standard Lesotho Bank is located across the street.

SHOPPING

Shoprite (S 28 52.258 E 028 02.647) is located on the main road through the city center.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

IMPACT Leribe Craft Centre (S 28 52.295 E 028 02.932, A1, ☎2240-0323) is an art and employment project run by the Anglican Church. It trains local women, many with disabilities, to spin and weave mohair into jackets, bags, scarves, placemats and a variety of other items. Profits from the sale of products go toward education and housing for members of the community who also have disabilities. The Centre is located near the main intersection of town on the A1, right next to the A25 turnoff to Katse Dam.

SLEEPING, EATING & DRINKING

Mountain View Hotel (S 28 52.288 E 028 02.761, Main St, ☎2240-0559, s M500, d M600) is the largest place to stay in town with a number of private cottages and rooms. Its sizeable new addition has more upmarket rooms spread over a manicured lawn. There are two pubs and a large onsite restaurant with a full menu, including good pizza.

Kingdom of Fried & Grilled Chicken (S 28 52.317 E 028 02.861, Main St, ☎5870-8394, 8am-7pm Mon-Sat, mains M15-30) serves up some incredibly good homemade meals at an equally good value. Try the beef stew, grilled chicken and vegetables with rice or pap.

TRANSPORTATION

Minibus Taxi Rank (S 28 52.570 E 028 02.558) has transport to a variety of destinations including Butha-Buthe (M10) and Katse (M70). Most transport to TY and Maseru will require a stop and transfer at the nearby Maputsoe rank (M5).

BUTHA-BUTHE

GPS: S 28 46.057 E 028 15.131
elevation 1,700 m/5,577 ft

Butha-Buthe was established as a tax collection post in 1884 so the local chief could pay taxes without having to travel all the way to Leribe. Today it is one of the more diverse towns in Lesotho with a sizeable Indian population. For those continuing on towards either the east or south, this is a good point to stock up on food, fuel and other supplies as the available options decline quickly in both directions.

MONEY

Standard Lesotho Bank ATM (S 28 46.121 E 028 14.977, A1, Village Walk Mall) is located inside the mall. There is also a Nedbank ATM.

INTERNET

Real Tech Computers (S 28 46.107 E 028 14.963, A1, ☎2846-1173, 8am-7pm, M5/15min) has six computers, printing services and wifi to connect a laptop. It is located in the Excel filling station building.

Computer Business Center (S 28 46.121 E 028 14.977, A1, Village Walk Mall, ☎5966-1682, 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat, M5/15min) has six computers for Internet use and allows laptops to plug in via Ethernet.

SHOPPING

Village Walk Mall (S 28 46.121 E 028 14.977, A1) has a number of shops including an Internet café, ATMs and fast food.

SLEEPING

IMPACT Butha-Buthe Hostel / Ha Thabo Ramakatane (S 28 47.931 E 028 15.344, Ha Sechele Village, ☎6313-1240 or ☎2246-1832, dm M100) is a wonderful way to get a taste of rural Lesotho living while brushing up on your Sesotho. There is a separate building next to the family home with two rooms and a small kitchen with a table and gas stove. While there's no running water or electricity, a nearby well supplies fresh, cool water. It is located just 4 km from Butha-Buthe on a rough dirt road. To get there, turn south off of the A1 onto the dirt road (S 28 46.078 E 028 15.090) at the sign for St Paul's High School - about 100 m west of the Caledonspoort border post road. Continue 1.2 km, turn left for 200 m and then right and continue 2.6 km to the nondescript house. If you get lost, just ask around; people in the village are used to directing lost foreigners to the location.

Likileng Lodge (S 28 45.238 E 028 15.412, ☎2246-0686, s/d M330) is located in a secure residential community, 2 km to the northeast of the city center, and does a lot of its business with government employees and functions. There are 23 rooms, each with a TV and small balcony overlooking the surrounding mountains, and the grounds have tennis courts, a swimming pool, a restaurant and bar.

Crocodile Inn (S 28 46.024 E 028 14.882, Hospital Rd, ☎2246-0223, s M400-440, d M500-580, breakfast included) is a plain establishment with a main building that was getting a much needed renovation when we visited. There are a number of more recently built rondavels in the back that



have a fresher feel than the standard rooms. The hotel also has the town's only formal restaurant.

EATING

Town Talk (S 28 46.084 E 028 14.986, A1, Total filling station, 8:30am-7:30pm Mon-Sat, 9:30am-2:30pm Sun, mains M15-25) serves up simple traditional food with various meat options and bunny chow.

Crocodile Inn Restaurant (S 28 46.024 E 028 14.882, Hospital Rd, ☎2246-0223, 7am-9pm, mains M35-65) is the only formal restaurant in town and has a decent menu of steaks, toasted sandwiches, burgers and pizza. It also serves a set brunch.

DRINKING & ENTERTAINMENT

The Hop Inn (S 28 44.869 E 028 15.072, ☎5959-5942, 10am-12am) is a large pub owned by a local British guy. There are a couple pool tables and a fireplace, and a trickle of customers frequent the pub throughout the week. On the weekends a laser light machine turns the place into a disco and it draws quite the crowd. Watch your pockets – Prince Harry got his mobile phone nicked when he was here a couple of years ago. It is located about 3 km off the A1 on the road to the Caledonspoort border crossing.

TRANSPORTATION

Minibus Taxi Rank (S 28 46.010 E 028 15.152, cnr A1 and Caledonspoort Border Rd) is located behind the Engen filling station with transport to Maputsoe (M20), Leribe (M12), Mokhotlong (M80), Oxbow (M50) and Joburg (M150).

LIPHOFUNG CAVE

CULTURAL HISTORICAL SITE

GPS: S 28 45.251 E 028 29.700

elevation 1,836 m/6,024 ft

Liphofung Cave (S 28 45.251 E 028 29.700, ☎2246-0723 or ☎2246-0813, www.lhwp.org.ls, 8am-5pm, adult M15, child M5) is a long sandstone overhang that has been used as a shelter for hundreds of years. The walls of the overhang are decorated with

old San rock art, and it is said that King Moshoeshoe I stayed here when he traveled through northern Lesotho. Local guides are on hand to explain the significance of some of the rock art on the cave walls.

There is a **Cultural Centre** (8am-5pm Mon-Fri) located next to the caves with a small gift shop and displays on San rock art, artifacts and Basotho culture.

SLEEPING

There are two self-catering four-bed rondavels (M250/person) located beside the caves. There are also more recently built and more upscale chalets that sleep up to six people (M450) in addition to camping (M40/person).

TRANSPORTATION

To get there, take the A1 roughly 40 km east of Butha-Buthe and take the signed turnoff to Liphofung at (S 28 45.703 E 028 29.947). Continue 1.5 km up the dirt road to the cultural center.

TS'EHLANYANE

NATIONAL PARK

GPS: S 28 55.610 E 028 25.683

elevation 1,934 m/6,345 ft

Ts'ehlanyane National Park (S 28 55.610 E 028 25.683, ☎2246-0723 or ☎2246-0813, www.lhwp.org.ls, M25/person, M10/vehicle) is a 56 square kilometer park with grassy mountains and valleys that bring together the Ts'ehlanyane and the Holomo rivers. The park is a great place for backcountry camping and serves as a protected area for Lesotho's indigenous forest, particularly the *Leucosidea sericea* (also known as Ouhout), a large evergreen shrub that flourishes in high elevations.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Hiking is the main activity within the reserve and there are a number of trails in the valleys that weave alongside the river. The granddaddy of all hikes in this area is the two to three-day, 40 km hike over mountain passes to the Bokong Nature Reserve. Local guides (M20/person/day) are recommended

Dongas

Dongas are ditches formed by soil erosion and are common throughout Lesotho. Usually a result of the destruction of vegetation that holds the topsoil together, the soil becomes prone to erosion from windstorms and to a much greater degree from the heavy rain and water that drains from the mountains above. Deforestation, plowing fields for crops, introduction of invasive plant species and overgrazing of cattle are a few of the contributing causes.

These dongas can range from small ditches that wash out parts of a road to massive ravines that cut through fields, destroying arable land and creating a huge obstacle for both people and animals that try to walk across them. There are a number of NGOs working on conservation projects with locals to address issues contributing to the increase in dongas. From planting vegetation that is better suited to hold the topsoil together to adjusting cultivation practices and building dams to naturally fill in the existing dongas, many people are working on reducing large-scale soil erosion.

for all hikes. Pony trekking (M150/day) can also be arranged with advanced notice.

SLEEPING

Camping (S 28 55.105 E 028 26.171, ☎27-31-702-8791, www.maliba-lodge.com, M50/person) areas are enclosed by bush on three sides and have a water tap and braai stand. They are located near the river beside the Riverside Lodges and are managed by the Maliba Lodge.

Backpacker Accommodation (S 28 55.510 E 028 25.874, M150/room) is located just past the main entrance gate in a dated conference center building run by the national park. The rooms, bathrooms and kitchen are basic, and it is self-catering only.

Riverside Lodge (S 28 55.105 E 028 26.171, ☎+27-31-702-8791, www.maliba-lodge.com, s M1,280, d M1,360, 4-person M1,520) is a set of recently built two-story stone and thatched roof chalets with balconies overlooking the river. The chalets have four bedrooms, can accommodate up to eight people and are fully equipped for self-catering. The chalets are managed by the nearby Maliba Lodge.

Maliba Lodge (S 28 54.862 E 028 26.163,

☎+27-31-702-8791, www.maliba-lodge.com, s M2,050, d M2,740, all meals included) is one of the top places to stay in the country. This recently built South Africa-owned, 5-star lodge offers impeccable service with a beautiful main building overlooking the five luxury thatched roof villas below. Each villa has an airy bedroom facing double patio doors that open onto a private mountain-facing deck. There is no cell phone coverage or Internet access in this area, which feels entirely appropriate here.

TRANSPORTATION

To get to the park, take the turnoff from the A1 onto the gravel road (S 28 47.953 E 028 12.789) about 6 km southwest of Butha-Buthe, and continue 33 km to the park entrance.

BOKONG

NATURE RESERVE

GPS: S 29 04.181 E 028 25.546

elevation 2,940 m/9,646 ft

Bokong Nature Reserve (S 29 04.181 E 028 25.546, A25, ☎2246-0723 or ☎2246-0813, www.lhwp.org.ls, adult M5, child M3) is a 20 square kilometer nature reserve high in the mountains midway between Leribe and Katse. The reserve is home to a number of bird species including the endangered bearded vulture as well as the small ice rat and rhebuck. One of the main attractions in the park is the 60 m Lepaqa Waterfall, which freezes during the winter into a tall, glassy ice pillar.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Visitor Information Center (S 29 04.181 E 028 25.546, A25, 8am-5pm) serves as the main entrance into the park and is perched on the edge of a 100 m cliff with panoramic views of the Lepaqa Valley and the surrounding mountains. It is located 3 km from the Mafika Lisiu Pass. There is a small craft shop and café inside and you can also hire a guide (M10) to take you on a short walk to the top of the Lepaqa Waterfall. Advance notice is required for all activities and accommodation within the park. It is not a bad idea to call ahead, even if you are just going to stop by the visitor center.



🌟 SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Hiking is the main activity within the reserve, and there are a number of trails starting from the visitor information center that range from 1hr to full day treks. There is also 2-3 day, 40 km hike over mountain passes to the Ts'ehlanyane National Park. Local guides (M20/person/day) are recommended for all hikes. Pony trekking (M150/day) can also be arranged with advance notice.

🏠 SLEEPING

Accommodation is located above the waterfall in two basic rondavels (M250/person) that have a small self-catering kitchen and gas stove. Camping is also permitted at the site and throughout the reserve, although nights can be quite cold at this elevation. When we visited, five beautiful, large chalets located right next to the visitor center atop the mountain cliff were in the process of being built, with no estimated date of completion.

🚗 TRANSPORTATION

Minibus Taxis pass by the visitor information center on their way between Leribe and Katse. Getting a ride to the park is convenient, although it might take a while to find a passing minibus with open seats on your way back.

For those traveling in their own vehicles, it is worth noting that while the road is paved there are some incredibly steep switchbacks over the passes.

KATSE DAM

GPS: S 29 20.211 E 028 30.375
elevation 2,055 m/6,742 ft

Katse is a small town that was built as a base for the companies and employees involved in the construction of the massive Katse Dam. The former workers' quarters have been converted into a lodge and guest cottages that today host visitors who come to see the dam.

🌟 SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Katse Dam (S 29 20.211 E 028 30.375) is a massive work of engineering. At 185 m tall it is Africa's largest dam, holding back about 2 billion cubic meters of water. It is the first in a series of dams built as part of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, which routes fresh water into neighboring South Africa in exchange for tens of millions of dollars each year. The water from the Katse Dam flows 45 km north in an underground tunnel to the Muela hydroelectric power station, and generates electricity for the entire country of Lesotho, before flowing across the border into South Africa. One-hour tours are available from the **Visitor Information Center** (S 29 20.648 E 028 30.399, 📍2291-0377, 8am-12pm & 1pm-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12pm Sat-Sun, tours M10) and cover the history of the project and provide an inside look within the dam wall at 9am and 2pm on Weekdays and at 9am and 11am on weekends. It is located on the main road about 600 m to the east of the road that leads to the dam.

Katse Botanical Garden (S 29 20.076 E 028 28.885, 📍2291-0377, 8am-12pm & 1pm-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12pm Sat-Sun, M5) was established as an area to relocate and protect the endangered spiral aloes that would have been destroyed as a result of the Katse Dam. The garden is now home to numerous endangered and medicinal plants from the area, some of which are available for purchase.

🏠 SLEEPING

Camping (S 29 20.708 E 028 30.674, 📍2291-0377, M20) is available in a flat field beside the visitor information center. The setting is basic, with an ablutions facility but not much else.

Orion Katse Lodge (S 29 19.842 E 028 28.873, 📍2291-0202, www.oriongroup.co.za/katse-overview.html, s M600, d M1,000, breakfast included) is a 40 room stone lodge at the edge of town with beautiful views overlooking the Katse Dam. This former workers' housing was taken over by the Orion Hotel chain and converted into a pleasant mid-range hotel with spacious rooms. There are also individual guest cottages nearby (M700-1,100). The hotel has a decent restaurant and bar and

The Lesotho Highlands Water Project

The Lesotho Highlands Water Project (www.lhwp.org.ls) formally started in 1986 when South Africa and Lesotho agreed to create a series of dams in the Lesotho highlands to harness the abundance of water in order to generate hydropower within Lesotho. The water now flows through a series of underground tunnels into South Africa. With financial backing from the World Bank, this decades-long project assists in the development of Lesotho and provides the Johannesburg region of South Africa with much-needed water for both residential and commercial use. The agreement requires South Africa to make annual payments to Lesotho to the tune of \$35 million in exchange for the mountain water.

Phase I of the project included the construction of the Muela Dam, the Katse Dam and the hydroelectric plant at Muela. Construction of another dam is currently underway as part of Phase II, and a fourth dam in Phase III is not scheduled to be completed until 2020.

Such a large-scale and expensive project comes with a number of side effects, both good and bad. Because of the dam development, roads within the country have been improved, jobs created and the tourism industry is getting a boost. However, there are also concerns about the environmental impacts of the project, corruption and the relocation of villages near the dam sites.



can organize fishing, boating and pony treks through the surrounding area.

🚗 TRANSPORTATION

Minibus Taxis have daily transport to Leribe (M70), and there is a daily bus service to Maseru. For those traveling in their own vehicles, it is worth noting that while the road is paved there are some incredibly steep switchbacks over the passes and it's not safe to drive this route in a less than roadworthy vehicle.



EASTERN HIGHLANDS

The Eastern Highlands are a beautiful section of Lesotho located high up in the towering snow-capped mountains. This remote region offers amazing drives, incredible views, some great hiking and the legendary Sani Pass. The main A1 artery that cuts through the mountains is paved all the way to Mokhotlong and navigable with most vehicles, however a 4x4 is highly recommend for those traversing the gravel and sometimes icy road from Mokhotlong to the Sani Pass.

MOKHOTLONG

GPS: S 29 17.317 E 029 03.928
elevation 2,192 m/7,192 ft

Mokhotlong (meaning "Place of the Bald Ibis") is the main town in northeastern Lesotho, but it is still very much a rural mountain settlement. It is the main supply town for rural villages, where you are just as likely to see locals riding ponies as driving cars. If heading south or east this is the last reliable place to stock up on food and supplies.

SLEEPING

Molumong Lodge (S 29 21.439 E 029 00.379, [+27-33-394-3072](tel:+27-33-394-3072), www.molumong.net, camping M60/person, dm M110, s/d M250) is a former trading post, and although located slightly out of town, it's one of the better accommodation options in the area. The lodge is perched atop the mountain with scenic views, and there is a main lodge as well as a separate backpackers building with a self-catering kitchen. There is a gas stove

and gas-heated showers but no electricity. The lodge offers pony trekking (M280/day) around the area, overnight trips to neighboring villages and guided hiking, and can also provide tubes for floating down the river. It is located 15 km south of Mokhotlong just off the dirt A3 road that heads to Thaba-Tseka.

St James Lodge (S 29 20.792 E 029 01.190, [+27-33-326-1601](tel:+27-33-326-1601) or [+27-71-672-6801](tel:+27-71-672-6801), camping M65/person, s M125-175, d M250-350) is affiliated with the St James Mission and has clean attractive en suite rooms in the recently renovated main lodge. There is also a self-catering kitchen and two separate rondavels but no electricity. It is located 12 km south of Mokhotlong just off the dirt A3 road that heads to Thaba-Tseka. Look for the buildings right beside the road with the red tin roofs.

TRANSPORTATION

Minibus Taxi Rank (S 29 18.448 E 029 01.574) has transport to Maseru (M80), Buta-Buthe (M50) and Sani Top (M70). To get to Molumong Guesthouse or St James Lodge, there are taxis heading south (M30).

SANI TOP

GPS: S 29 35.073 E 029 17.150
elevation 2,875 m/9,432 ft

The Sani Pass is the highest mountain pass in the country and the only vehicle-accessible border crossing between Lesotho and KwaZulu-Natal. The road on both sides of the pass is gravel with tightly wound switchbacks. At the top the pass reaches 2,875 m with beautiful views. On the Lesotho side of the border you can enjoy a beer at the Sani Top Chalet - the "highest pub in Africa."

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

There are a number of hiking trails that depart from the Sani Top area including a trail to southern Africa's highest peak - Thabana-Ntlenyana at 3,482 m. Guides for serious ascents such as this or for easier day hikes can be arranged through **Sani Top Chalet** (S 29 35.073 E 029 17.291, [+27-33-702-1069](tel:+27-33-702-1069) or [+27-76-386-7021](tel:+27-76-386-7021), www.sanitopchalet.co.za).

They can also arrange horses with advanced notice if you would prefer to ride the trails instead of hike.

SLEEPING, EATING & DRINKING

Sani Top Chalet (S 29 35.073 E 029 17.291, [+27-33-702-1069](tel:+27-33-702-1069) or [+27-76-386-7021](tel:+27-76-386-7021), www.sanitopchalet.co.za, camping M80/person, s M150, d M300, rondavels: s M650, d M1,000) is one of the finer spots to stop and enjoy a beverage while overlooking the mountain descent into South Africa. Accommodation is available in a backpacker lodge or in a number of luxury en suite rondavels with fireplaces. Meals can be prepared with advance notice, although there are self-catering facilities as well. In the winter, the temperature is well below freezing so make sure to be prepared. Electricity is generator-powered and is usually on for only a few hours a night.

TRANSPORTATION

If you are driving your own vehicle, a 4x4 is highly recommended. In the winter it is common for ice to build up on the gravel road making the drive more difficult. The border post is open 8am-4pm.

Snow Skiing in Africa

Afriski (S 28 49.364 E 028 43.693, A1, Oxbow, +27-11-888-8881, day pass R350) is one of only two ski resorts in southern Africa and is the only ski hill in Lesotho. Situated high in the Maluti Mountains at 3,229 meters, the ski resort opened in 2005 and draws most of its customer base from South Africa. There is one main run and a newly built snowboard park, and the season generally runs from early June to early September. There is also an equipment rental shop and a full restaurant and bar at the main lodge. There is a wide variety of accommodations options available at the resort including private two-story four-bedroom chalets (M2,700-4,500), individual lodge rooms (M700-900), and a self-catering backpacker facility (M110) where linen is not included.